

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A mid-mount mower having a mower unit mounted between a front wheel unit and a pair of right and left rear wheels arranged rearwardly of a vehicle body to be independently speed-shiftable, comprising:

a front frame unit including a pair of right and left front longitudinal frames, a first cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in forward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, and a second cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in rearward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, said front frame unit supporting said front wheel unit and also supporting a lift mechanism for vertically movably suspending the mower unit;

a rear frame unit including a pair of right and left rear longitudinal frames, said rear frame unit being connected to said front frame unit; and

a rear wheel drive unit interconnecting said rear longitudinal frames;

wherein said second cross frame has a mid-portion that defines a downwardly opening recess ~~disposed adjacent a middle position thereof~~, said recess allowing entry thereto of an upwardly protruding portion of said mower unit without interference when said mower unit is raised by said lift mechanism.

2. (Previously Presented) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 1, wherein said upwardly protruding portion of the mower unit is a gear case protrusively mounted on a mower deck.

3. (Previously Presented) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 1, wherein said upwardly protruding portion of the mower unit is a universal joint connecting an input shaft of the mower unit to a drive transmission shaft.

4. (Currently Amended) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 1, wherein said second cross frame includes a first profile member (13a)-having said mid-portion that is gate-shaped~~a gate-shape portion (13aa) defining to define the~~ recess (28)-and horizontal plate portions (13ab)-connected respectively to lower ends of said ~~gate-shape portion~~gate-shaped mid-portion, and a vertical plate member (13b)-connected to a rear end surface of said first profile member.

5. (Currently Amended) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 4, wherein said horizontal plate portions (13ab)-are arranged to receive rear ends of a footboard sheet member disposed as sunken between said right and left front longitudinal frames, and said vertical plate member (13b)-having an upper end thereof supporting a pivotal axis of a driver's seat.

6. (Currently Amended) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 1, wherein said second cross frame includes a first profile member (13a)-having a gate-shape portion (13aa)-defining a recess (28)-and horizontal plate portions (13ab)-connected respectively to lower ends of said gate-shape portion, a tilted vertical plate member (13b)-connected to a rear end surface of said first profile member, a rear wall member (13e)-connected to a rear end of the tilted vertical plate member (13b)-to define therewith an internal space extending transversely of the vehicle body, and side plates (13d)-for covering the internal space from lateral directions.

7. (New) A mid-mount mower having a mower unit mounted between a front wheel unit and a pair of right and left rear wheels arranged rearwardly of a vehicle body to be independently speed-shiftable, comprising:

a front frame unit including a pair of right and left front longitudinal frames, a first cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in forward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, and a second cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in rearward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, said front frame unit supporting said front wheel unit and also supporting a lift mechanism for vertically movably suspending the mower unit;

a rear frame unit including a pair of right and left rear longitudinal frames, said rear frame unit being connected to said front frame unit; and

a rear wheel drive unit interconnecting said rear longitudinal frames;

wherein said second cross frame has a downwardly opening recess disposed adjacent a middle position thereof such that a top surface of the recess is defined by a top portion of said second cross frame and wherein, said recess allowing entry thereto of an upwardly protruding portion of said mower unit without interference when said mower unit is raised by said lift mechanism.

8. (New) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 7, wherein the second cross frame has the top portion and a pair of generally vertically extending portions defining a part of the recess.

9. (New) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 8, wherein the second cross frame has a generally horizontally extending portion connected to a lower part of each of the pair of generally vertically extending portions.

10. (New) A mid-mount mower as defined in claim 9, wherein the second cross frame has a vertical member connected to a rear edge of the pair of generally vertically extending portions.

11. (New) A mid-mount mower having a mower unit mounted between a front wheel unit and a pair of right and left rear wheels arranged rearwardly of a vehicle body to be independently speed-shiftable, comprising:

a front frame unit including a pair of right and left front longitudinal frames, a first cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in forward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, and a second cross frame interconnecting said front longitudinal frames in rearward positions thereof longitudinally of the vehicle body, said front frame unit supporting said front wheel unit and also supporting a lift mechanism for vertically movably suspending the mower unit;

a rear frame unit including a pair of right and left rear longitudinal frames, said rear frame unit being connected to said front frame unit; and

a rear wheel drive unit interconnecting said rear longitudinal frames;

a footboard having a foot-resting surface;

wherein said second cross frame has a downwardly opening recess disposed adjacent a middle position thereof such that a top surface of the recess is defined by a top portion of said second cross frame and wherein, said recess allowing entry thereto of an upwardly protruding portion of said mower unit without interference when said mower unit is raised by said lift mechanism, and wherein

the top portion of said second cross frame is at a higher level than said foot-resting surface of the footboard.